Lesson 37 - Fermented And Putrefied Foods In The Diet; Studies Of Other Junk Foods

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1. Introduction

RECIPE: "Take one fish and press it under a heavy stone for 24 hours. Remove the fish and pound it until soft and add two cups of salt. Lay the fish in the open sun for another day. Pack fish into straw and put into an open jar. Set jar with fish out in the sun for another month. Smash month-old salted fish into a paste and use it as a soup or spread. Delicious!"

This is a recipe for probably the first fermented food ever eaten by man. Today he eats many more types of foods that have undergone some fermenting processes. Cheese, yogurt, pickles, sauerkraut, soy sauce, vinegar, beer and buttermilk are some of the more common fermented foods eaten today.

None of them are necessary in the diet.

1.1 What Is A Fermented Food?

A fermented food is basically a food that has been very carefully spoiled. Fermentation occurs when certain microorganisms (bacteria) break down a food into various waste products. If the "wrong" types of microorganisms decompose the food, then putrefaction, or rotting, occurs.

Fermented foods, then, are the result of active bacteria and contain their waste products (lactic acid and acetic acid are two examples). Putrefied or rotten foods also contain bacteria and certain waste products (usually a nitrogenous substance like ammonia).

Why do people want to eat rotting or decayed foods? Can these foods be beneficial in any way, as some people have claimed? What happens when you eat fermented foods?

1.2 How Fermented Foods Began

Fermented foods like yogurt, pickles, beer and so on were originally used as a substance for fresh foods. Fermentation became a way of preserving foods for the time when there was no supply of fresh food. In effect, man found a way to "spoil" his food by choice so that he could eat it at a later date.

Cheese, for example, was one way that milk could be preserved without refrigeration. Excess cucumbers and cabbage were turned into pickles and sauerkraut for the winter. Fermented foods were actually some of the first preserved foods.

And, like all preserved foods, they cannot supply the ingredients of good nutrition. Still, man has eaten them for hundreds of years, and over that time he has developed some good reasons (or excuses) for

eating foods that are full of bacteria, decay and waste products. Let's look at the reasons given for including fermented foods in the diet.

2. The Myths Of Fermented Foods

Fermented foods have been used and have been recommended in the diet for basically four reasons:

1. Fermented foods are a healthy way to preserve food.
2. Fermented foods can replace beneficial bacteria in the intestines.
3. Fermented foods can aid digestion.
4. Fermented foods are necessary for a long life. All of these reasons are false.

2.1 Fermentation Is NOT A Healthy Way To Keep Foods

Once a food has begun to ferment, it usually continues to do so until it has completely rotted. To halt the fermentation process, either salt, vinegar or extreme cold is used to inhibit the growth of the bacteria living in the food.

Many fermented foods are heavily salted. Salt is a biocide. It kills and inhibits life. The salt in fermented foods prevents the native bacteria from multiplying to the point where putrefaction occurs.

Salt is a useless and harmful inorganic chemical that should never be eaten. Pickles, sauerkraut, cheese and other fermented foods are very heavily salted. Foods preserved with salt should not be included in the diet.

Vinegar is another popular additive to various fermented foods. Vinegar itself is the result of fermentation and is used in concentration to halt the continual decay of fermented foods.

Vinegar, however, disrupts the digestion, kills healthy blood cells, and irritates all the membranes. Pickles and other foods which have been soaked in vinegar are rendered totally indigestible. Many times the digestive juices cannot penetrate and break down the food preserved by vinegar, and so the fermented food passes through the system just as it was swallowed.

A few fermented foods, such as yogurt and beer, are not salted or preserved with vinegar. These types of fermented foods are usually held at low temperatures or bottled to inhibit the continuing growth of the fermenting bacteria ?

2.2 Fermented Foods Do NOT Replace Beneficial Bacteria

One of the reasons most often given for eating fermented food is that they replace beneficial bacteria which naturally live in the intestines. These bacteria aid in the breakdown of food particles and are a part of our native intestinal microflora.

By eating foods rich in bacteria (such as fermented foods), it is believed that our own native bacteria will be enriched and re-established. It sounds reasonable, but this is also a myth.

The effects of fermented foods on the intestinal bacteria are only transitory at best. For example, one of the major so-called beneficial bacteria is called *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*. It's found in yogurt and other naturally fermented foods.

This bacteria, however, *is not a normal inhabitant of the intestine*, and it does not survive long in that environment. In fact, as soon as the foods containing this bacteria are no longer eaten, this "beneficial" bacteria packs its bags and leaves your intestines with the next bowel movement.

Still, there is the persistent insistence that fermented foods can somehow re-establish the needed bacteria in the intestines. People are often advised to drink buttermilk or eat some yogurt or take a swig of acidolphilus after taking antibiotics which have killed the "beneficial" bacteria along with the so-called "harmful" bacteria.

This is quite humorous. First, some bacteria are deemed bad or harmful and a pill is taken to kill them. But the pill works too well, and bacteria we call "good" are also killed. So now we must eat foods full of bacteria to get the "good" bacteria back into our system!

Because of these claims made for fermented foods, much research has been done to see if they can indeed reestablish beneficial bacteria in the intestines. According to a study reported in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, the influence of "dietary microflora (bacteria) on the large intestine microflora is unsubstantiated." The researchers also discovered that even eating *two pounds daily* of true Bulgarian yogurt "failed to elicit a response in the fecal flora."

2.3 Myth: Fermented Foods Aid Digestion

When a rotten or spoiled food is eaten, the body hurries it to the nearest exit in an effort to protect itself. If the food is extremely putrefactive, diarrhea may result. If the food is fermented, an increased motility of the intestines occurs. This increase in intestinal motion is wrongly associated with beneficial digestive or laxative properties of the fermented food. In reality, the body is trying to speedily eliminate a substandard food.

The idea that fermented foods could somehow make digestion easier probably came from the observations of people who could not tolerate whole milk but could eat yogurt or some other fermented milk product.

Over 70% of the world's adults cannot digest milk. They lack a digestive enzyme called *lactase* that is needed to digest milk sugar or *lactose*. Undigested lactose results in diarrhea, cramping and abdominal pains. Fermented milk products are low in lactose, and cause less discomfort than unfermented milk.

Two things should be obvious from this discussion. First, fermented foods (in this case, fermented milk products) are *not* aiding digestion, but instead are just low in one of the factors that may cause digestive distress (lactose). Digestion is always and entirely under control by the body. Foods cannot "aid" digestion anymore than they can aid breathing or circulation. True, unsuitable foods can disrupt digestion (like milk and its products) but it is fallacious to say that foods which do not disrupt digestion are in fact aiding it. Food is inert. It can do nothing. It is acted on by the body. It cannot perform or abet an active, organic process.

The second thing to be learned is that obviously milk and its products are not good foods for the human body. If a food cannot be enjoyed in its natural and unprocessed state, then it is not a suitable food for the human diet. If milk must first be fermented (or partially decomposed) before it can be tolerated, then why should it ever be used in the first place?

Remember that foods cannot improve digestion, be they papayas or yogurt or sauerkraut. Digestion is improved by allowing the body to rest from this process (fasting) and letting it regenerate its own capacities—not by swallowing a fermented and rotted food.

2.4 Eating Rotting Foods For Longer Life?

The most romantic myth about fermented foods is that they can prolong your life. We are given images of 100-year-old Russians dutifully swallowing their yogurt or we're told about how every long-lived

people include at least one fermented food in their diet.

Here is a recent promotion for eating yogurt, perhaps the most popular fermented food: "Yogurt can cure ulcers, relieve sunburn and forestall a hangover. It can be used as a facial or as a remedy for malaria. It confers long life and good looks, prolongs youth and fortifies the soul...."

Stay young, live long and have your soul fortified—quite a claim for a dish full of soured milk. If only it were true.

The idea that fermented foods can prolong life is totally unsubstantiated. This belief got its start around the turn of the twentieth century when an over-enthusiastic researcher named Uya Metchnikoff visited the Bulgarians in Europe. He discovered they had the greatest number of people who had lived past 100, and most of these people also incidentally ate yogurt. He seized upon these two coincidents and tried to present them as "cause" and "effect" without any real research or facts.

Other health writers since that time accepted Metchnikoff's speculations as truth and let their imaginations run wild. The truth is this: *There has never been any validated research which indicates that yogurt or any other food has "life-prolonging" properties*. One nutritional researcher, Beatrice Trum Hunter, states that "the yogurt in the long-lived Bulgarians diet was by no means the entire reason. The generous quantities of home-grown vegetables and their stress-free lifestyle played the vital roles in health and longevity of these people."

It's always tempting to think you can eat yourself into a long life, and for those people who fall prey to that kind of thinking, the yogurt manufacturers can find a ready market.

A long life, full of happiness and well-being, has as one of its requirements that wholesome, natural foods in an unprocessed state make up the diet. In any case, fermented and rotting foods could not be termed wholesome or natural. In no way, should yogurt or any other fermented food be given "magical" properties by over-enthusiastic promoters and writers.

3. The Harmful Effects of Fermented Foods

So far, we have only discussed the myths of the supposedly beneficial effects of fermented foods. Can we say that even though these foods may not be particularly beneficial that they are perhaps harmless? No.

Fermented foods are not only ineffective, but they possess harmful properties as well. We have already mentioned that many fermented foods are heavily salted or preserved with vinegar which makes them harmful. What are some of the other bad properties of these foods?

3.1 The Side-Effects of Fermentation

When foods ferment, or decompose, certain waste products are produced by the bacteria which break down the food. One of these byproducts is alcohol. Many fermented foods, such as soy sauce, contain a significant amount of alcohol. Of course the alcohol in fermented foods is usually a small quantity (unless the fermented food happens to be wine or beer!), but even small amounts of alcohol affect the cells of the body.

Ammonia is another product of fermentation. Fermented soy may be as much as 15% *ammonia*. Ammonia is dangerous enough as a house-cleaning agent. You certainly shouldn't be eating it.

Vinegar, in the form of *acetic acid*, also results from food fermentation. This acid gives fermented foods their sour or sharp taste. That sharp taste is a signal to the body that the food should not be eaten as it is harmful. Vinegar prevents the digestion of foods, so a food filled with vinegar and other similar byproducts would seem to be indigestible.

Another acid that results from fermentation is *lactic acid*. Lactic acid is a waste product. If you have ever exercised or worked harder than usual, you might notice a stiffness or soreness in your muscles. That stiffness results from a buildup of lactic acid in the muscles. Now eating fermented foods that contain lactic acid may not make you "stiff," but does it seem intelligent to eat foods that are already high in waste byproducts?

Other acids are also present in fermented foods. Carbonic acid is found in fermented foods and also soft drinks. All of these acids are the wastes produced by the bacteria which are feeding on the decomposing, "fermented" foods.

3.2 Fermented Foods Are Low In Nutrition

The foods that are highest in nutrition are those which are eaten in their fresh, natural and unprocessed state. As soon as a food is tampered with in any way, nutrient loss results. The longer a food is held in storage, the lower it becomes in nutrition.

Fermented foods are usually processed or destroyed in some manner. After that, they are often stored and used over a period of weeks or even months. You can eat a pickle that was once a cucumber perhaps one or two years ago, but it is very doubtful if any of the original nutrients remain in that cucumber.

Many times, foods are first heated to a high temperature before fermentation is allowed to occur. Milk is first heated or pasteurized to kill off all bacteria. Then it is inoculated with a specific bacteria strain to ferment it into yogurt. The milk serves merely as a bacteria culture ground.

If heat is not used, then the food is often chopped, sliced, smashed or blended. A whole head of cabbage does not readily "ferment," but if you bruise and chop it to pieces, then the bacteria will do their natural job of finishing the decomposition process. Whenever foods are cut, chopped or sliced to start the fermentation process, rapid oxidation of the food and a nutrient loss occur.

Another reason given for eating fermented foods is that they are high in B-vitamins, or that they may somehow encourage the body to produce more Vitamin B12 in its intestines. Just the opposite may be true.

According to research, the levels of Vitamin B12 may be *reduced* by fermented foods. A Bulgarian report indicates that the bacteria within yogurt use the B12 *for their own growth*. The B12 in kefir (a fermented milk drink) decreases in proportion to its fermentation.

Instead of adding nutritional benefits to the food, fermentation decreases some vitamin and mineral availability.

We've explored the myths surrounding fermented foods and described some of the harmful effects that may occur from their use. Now it's time to name names and discuss each popular fermented food.

4. Types of Fermented Foods in the Diet

Various fermented foods are eaten all over the world. Fermented fish cake is a delicacy in Japan, while the Koreans eat pickled garlic. Our discussion of fermented foods is limited to those foods eaten in the United States.

4.1 With A Moo-Moo Here...

The most popular types of fermented foods in this country are those made from dairy products. We have already discussed the unsuitability of milk and its products as human foods, so we'll give you a brief rundown on other aspects of these fermented foods.

4.2 Yogurt

Yogurt has been aggressively marketed as a health food. It's been called the "perfect food" and "insurance for good health." The U.S. Department of Agriculture in its yearbook for 1965 makes this unqualified statement: "Yogurt has no food or health values other than those present in the kind of milk from which it is made."

Yogurt has also been advertised as the perfect diet food. Even on this point, yogurt fails. It is high in saturated animal fats, and although plain yogurt has 154 calories per cup, over 80% of all yogurt eaten is the sweetened fruit-flavored variety which has 275 calories a cup.

Research in the last ten years has pointed out another danger of yogurt: cataracts. A cataract is the cloudiness of the lens of the eye. In severe cases, it causes blindness.

In animal experiments, *all* animals that were fed yogurt exclusively for several months developed cataracts in both eyes. In parts of India where yogurt is a large proportion of the diet, the incidence of cataracts is very high. A coincidence? Doubtful.

Researchers finally decided that some individuals may develop cataracts if they eat foods containing high levels of galactose (a sugar less soluble and sweet than glucose). Yogurt is one of the highest foods in galactose. Most commercial yogurts are 22% to 24% galactose.

People that usually do not eat dairy products sometimes feel obligated to sneak some yogurt into their diet for "health" reasons. There is nothing magical or healthy about yogurt. Like all milk products, it should not be used in the diet.

4.3 Don't Say Cheese!

Cheese is a very popular fermented food. The harmful effects of this food have already been discussed in an earlier lesson. You may want to consider this fact: most commercial cheeses have their fermentation process started by the addition of *rennet* to the milk. Rennet contains the enzyme rennin which is found naturally in the stomach of a cow.

To get rennet to ferment the cheese, the stomachs of cows are scraped. These stomach extracts are then added to the milk for curdling the cheese. So, can you be a "vegetarian" and still eat cheese which is made with stomach scrapings of cows? Probably not.

Cheese is a food that is always rotting. Leave a piece at room temperature and you'll have blue, green, white and yellow mold growing all over it. Some people even like to eat this mold, but then some people will eat anything. You don't need "moldy milk" or cheese in your diet.

4.4 Buttermilk, Sour Cream and Kefir

There are other fermented dairy foods besides cheese and yogurt. Buttermilk and kefir are two popular fermented milk drinks. Sour cream is exactly that: cream that has soured and gone bad.

Be aware that not only are these foods substandard because they are dairy products, but they are often adulterated before being sold. Buttermilk frequently has salt added to it; kefir is usually sweetened, and sour cream will have preservatives to keep it from becoming totally putrid.

4.5 Vegetables You Can't Digest

A popular diet a few years ago allowed the dieter to eat all the pickles he or she could hold. If you wanted a snack, eat a pickle. If you had a meal, eat some pickles with it. Why? Because pickles are indigestible. They pass right through just as they were eaten, undigested and unabsorbed. There are better ways to lose weight that this pickle diet, but it does point out one fact: pickled and fermented vegetables are indigestible.

A cucumber is an excellent vegetable. It's crisp, slightly sweet, full of vital fluids, minerals, vitamins and amino acids. But if you soak that cucumber in vinegar and make a "fermented" food out of it, you've destroyed any beneficial properties it had. Digestive juices cannot penetrate pickled foods. They're like eating rubber. They pass right through you in the same small chunks that you chewed.

They are also heavily salted, spiced and preserved. They should not be eaten.

Although almost any vegetable can be fermented, the next most popular vegetable besides cucumbers for this purpose is cabbage. Sauerkraut is eaten in great quantities by some nationalities. Could it possibly be an acceptable food? Here is what T.C. Fry wrote about this food in 1981: "Sauerkraut is indigestible. The acetic acid (vinegar) that results from its bacterial decomposition is damaging to our digestive tract and inhibits the digestion and utilization of foods eaten with it. It is in the same class as all rotted foods."

4.6 Where's The Joy In Soy?

Most of the fermented foods eaten in the world are made from soybeans. Of course, most of these fermented soy foods are chiefly popular in the Orient, but in the last few years they have greatly increased in use in this country as a result of the macrobiotic and other health movements. Is a fermented soybean good for you? You probably know the answer by now, but let's look at some of them briefly:

Soy Sauce or Tamari: This is the most popular fermented soy product. It is a liquid made from fermenting soybeans and sometimes wheat in large barrels. The end product is a very dark and salty liquid. It contains ammonia, alcohol and various acids. It is also 18% salt.

Miso: Another high-salt fermented food made from soybeans principally. It is used in great quantities by the Japanese, which in turn makes them the highest salt-consuming nation on earth. The Japanese also have the highest rates of stomach cancer on earth—a fact closely related to their high-salt intake of fermented and pickled foods.

Tempeh: This is not a very widely known fermented soy food yet, but it is being very aggressively marketed by private soy industries in this country and also by the Department of Agriculture. Tempeh is a cake of souring soybeans that have a heavy layer of grey-white mold growing all over them. This heavy layer of mold is somehow supposed to make the soybeans more digestible (incidentally, soybeans are probably the hardest to digest of all beans, none of which are easy to digest anyway).

Research in the last 15 years has shown that there are dozens of different toxins produced by molds. Different molds produce different toxins. Aflatoxin is the best known toxin and is a potent cancer-causing agent. All molds, however, produce their own unique toxin. Cooking does not destroy the toxins

produced by mold. Why anyone would desire to eat moldy foods is a mystery, but it is no secret that they are dangerous.

4.7 Other Fermented Foods

There are fermented grain products such as sourdough bread. There are fermented drinks such as beer and wine. Some health enthusiasts have devised fermented "nut" cheeses and saltless sauerkraut.

There are two things you need to know about these and all other fermented foods. First, these foods are not needed in the diet. They perform no function, provide no special nutrients, contain no "beneficial" bacteria and have no magical, life-extending properties. Secondly, all fermented foods contain harmful bacterial waste byproducts as well as possible salt, vinegar and other preservatives. In and of themselves, they are harmful to the living organism.

If a person follows the biologically correct diet of fresh, unprocessed fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and sprouts, he will have no perverse cravings for such spoiled foods. Eating rotting, putrefying and decomposing foods is an acquired habit, much like meat-eating and eating junk foods. Like these perverse habits, the practice of eating fermented and putrefied foods should be quickly abandoned by the dedicated seeker of health.

5. Questions & Answers

I think you're wrong. Whenever my stomach is upset, I can eat yogurt but any other food bothers me.

> Fermented foods may be "tolerated" by people with poor digestion because in actuality these foods do not digest at all! The body has the wisdom to recognize a spoiled and rotted food (which is what a fermented food is). It tries to hurry this food through the digestive tract to the anus where it can be quickly expelled and not disrupt the body. You don't digest a fermented food—you can only quickly eliminate it.
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> By the way, no food should be eaten on an upset stomach. People often make the mistake of eating something to "soothe" digestive upset. If you ever experience any digestive discomfort, that is a strong signal for you to skip or postpone your next meal.

Almost every country in the world has some fermented food that they eat. Don't you think that means something?

> Tradition and popularity are the poorest ways to determine a proper diet. The only authority you should rely on when it comes to determining what is best to eat is your own body. In other words, the physiology and anatomy of your body are what make foods "acceptable" or "harmful" in the diet.
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> Your physiology will not accept fermented or rotting foods as a substitute for wholesome foods. Your body does not digest them. The waste products in such foods disrupt the digestion. The nutrient loss in fermented foods makes them unbalanced. Learn about the physiology of your body and the mechanics of digestion. These will tell you

more about a good diet than the mistakes made by millions of others.

I make my own saltless and raw sauerkraut from fresh cabbage. I also have "yogurt" made from milk of blended raw nuts. I enjoy these foods and they have not been cooked, salted or so on, Why shouldn't I continue to use them?

Let me ask a question. Do you actually improve the cabbage or nuts or whatever you ferment by this process? No. You have processed them either by blending, chopping, liquifying, grinding or whatever. You have fractured the foods and encouraged oxidation and nutrient loss. You have allowed fresh and wholesome foods to slowly decompose and rot from bacterial action.

What do you gain from all of this? Better health? Mysterious benefits? Nothing at all. If there's no benefit to fermented foods, why go to all the trouble of adulterating your food? True, you are using the best of ingredients with no harmful additives. But by encouraging these foods to putrify to give them a sour taste, you are wasting them and doing yourself no good at all.

Article #1: Excerpt from The Health Crusader

If cooked and processed foods, meat, coffee, tea and other beverages are so poisonous, how come 75% of our population live to be 70 to 80, some even older? If dead food and poisonous foods are so bad, that doesn't seem right. There is some contradiction in your teachings somewhere along the way. Please explain.

Your question really opens a can of worms! First, there are some unwarranted assumptions, namely that people live to be 70 or 80 on an exclusively dead food diet containing poisonous beverages and processed foods. That is not true. Most people do get raw foods almost on a daily basis. It is because of these foods that we survive as well as we do. The main thing humans require in their food intake is fuel, and cooked foods do furnish this. But they also give an unwanted product—poisonous ashes which result from the breakdown or destruction of food from heat. These poisonous ashes are not as readily observable as ashes in a fireplace or from a cigarette, but they are there nonetheless. Consuming ash-laden food is destructive. It is by a thin margin that we last as long as we do.

The human body is marvelously complex. It has hundred of defensive mechanisms to protect it against the ravages of poisons. The body has a tremendous capacity for throwing off poisons. But this capacity is best not used because each bout with poisons lowers our vitality until finally we become the whimpering suffering bunch that the majority of us really are. Did you know that over 50% of Americans suffer from some serious chronic illness? Did you know Americans suffer over 600 million colds a year? Did you know that 50 percent of American meals end up in indigestion? Did you know that 45 percent of Americans die of heart problems? Another 20 percent from cancer?

Humans are hard to kill—that's all that your question indicates. If we look into the factors of

longevity, we see that disease and suffering are very, very common among Americans. It's incredible that many live to 70 or 80! But, if we lived healthily we might live to well over 100 on the average—*without any suffering!* America is so bad off healthwise that I can say there's a 99% chance that you have bad teeth, a 72 percent probability that you have less than perfect eyesight (perfect is normal), a 50 percent chance that you have some nagging perpetual ailment, and so on.

Yes, it is remarkable that the human body can take so much punishment and yet survive. But that is no reason to continue the abuse of our highly-developed organism. It will be so much more serviceable and perform so much better if it is accorded the care it requires. In this regard it is like an automobile. But, unlike an automobile, we cannot replace it. Attempts are made to replace body parts but this is often unsuccessful or unsatisfactory because the body rejects alien tissues.

Do you know what happens to those who don't get enough nutrients and who consume junk food and other poisonous substances? Have you ever wondered why cancer is now our number one child killer? The truth is that junk foods, cokes and sodas, meats, eggs, etc. cannot make healthy (normal) cells. Without the minimum nutrients needed the powers of life wane and the poisons wreak their havoc until leukemia or other cancers result. One of the most prominent features of our way of life is our prevalent disease and suffering. The average Chinaman is a living example of fitness and well-being compared with the average American. Yet this is not to praise the Chinese mode of living. Rather, theirs is simply much less harmful than our own. They do so many more things that are right by their bodies than we do.

Americans play the game of Russian roulette with their bodies. But it's our life, not a game. Learn how to live healthfully. Then apply what you know. Put what you're learning into practice now.